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# Intrigue by U.S. in Cambodia/2

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Second of two articles

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On March 3, 1955, Sihanouk abdicated as king in favour of his father, Norodom Suramarit. He did so in a typical surprise move by sending an envelope to the Phnom Penh radio station, asking the program director to play the enclosed tape in place of the customary midday newscast. It was a recorded speech of abdication. Even to those in circles closest to him, this came as a complete surprise. Shortly afterwards I asked why he had done it. He said: "I wanted to offer proof to our young people, especially our young students that my efforts for the country and nation had nothing to do with the wish to be his Majesty the King, or to my attachment to the throne . . ."

There is no question that he chose to end the monarchy to play a more direct role in the country's affairs, believing it was the only way of ensuring the country's independence from American attempts to replace France in Indochina. (As his father had no other heirs, the monarchy as an institution would end with the death of Sihanouk's parents and for all practical purposes it ended with Sihanouk's abdication.) In the same broadcast Sihanouk announced the formation of the Sangkum, which was to become virtually the exclusive political movement in the country.

(Sihanouk's recent announcement from Peking that he would not seek to regain office as chief of state reveals that he realizes once again that a whole era has come to an end and a new one starting in which, as he expressed it, neither the type of regime which he headed in the past nor that which had overthrown him would have a place. The future belonged to the people, but first there would have to be a struggle for real national liberation, in which Sihanouk pledged himself to take part on the side of the people.)

By the end of 1955, pressure on Cambodia to join SEATO began to reach fantastic proportions. There was direct pressure on Sihanouk from John Foster Dulles himself. Approved For Release 2000/06/13 : CIA-RDP75-00601R00010002009402  
Allen, head of the CIA, came to Phnom Penh with

"proofs" of impending "communist aggression," from which SEATO could provide the only protection, Sihanouk replied that the 1954 Geneva Agreements provided for Cambodian neutrality. Dulles knew very well that without Cambodian agreement and U.S. military power solidly implanted in that country up to the borders of South Vietnam, SEATO would be ineffective as an instrument of U.S. domination of the area.

I arrived in Phnom Penh in March 1956 when pressures were building up to their climax. Sihanouk had outraged the State Department by visiting Peking, despite warnings by the U.S. ambassador to Phnom Penh. Work on the road from Sihanoukville, already taking shape as a port, had still not started and the U.S. was threatening to cut off economic aid altogether. South Vietnam and Thailand had closed their frontiers with Cambodia and started an economic blockade. U.S. planes officially taking part in SEATO maneuvers were openly violating Cambodian air space from bases in Thailand. "Khmer Serei" irregulars were making raids into the country from Thailand. The U.S. ambassador recently installed in nearby Bangkok was the same John Peurifoy who had engineered the overthrow of the independent Arbenz government of Guatemala.

## U.S. claims innocence

I wrote a series of articles describing the situation as ominously reminiscent of that on the eve of the CIA-sponsored action in Guatemala. Some were picked up and rebroadcast over Peking and Hanoi radio. John Foster Dulles took it upon himself to deny one of these in a letter to the Cambodian foreign ministry on April 17, 1956, in which he expressed "alarm that statements from various sources are giving increasing publicity to allegations according to which the U.S. tried to force Cambodia into joining the SEATO pact by threatening to withdraw U.S. economic aid and that the U.S. had obliged independent and friendly nations such as Vietnam and Thailand to impose measures of economic warfare against Cambodia . . ." Dulles denounced the allegations as "completely false" and warned they "could damage the friendly relations existing between our two states . . ." He further pointed out that the U.S. ambassador to Cambodia some days earlier had informed the king and queen that "the U.S. has never publicly made any official observations concerning Cambodian neutrality . . ."

Sihanouk immediately published a declaration whose first point stated that it was curious for Dulles to reply to newspaper articles by a letter to the Cambodian foreign ministry. He then dwelt with the matter of "no public or official" U.S. observations on Cambodian neutrality, stating:

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has never made any observations about Cambodian neutrality. However, private American 'advice' and

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